
Light Sovereign

Parical Comedy in Three Acts

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The Light Sovereign

A Farcical Comedy in Three Acts

By
Henry Harland
&
Hubert Crackanthorpe



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1 Grenville Place · S.W.

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Characters

FERDINAND XVIII.

Grand Duke of Norenfels ; aged eighty-six ; appears only in Act I.

MAXIMILIAN.

His eldest and only surviving son ; heir-apparent ; aged about sixty ; married, but has no children ; appears only in Act I.

PHILIBERT.

(Leading part.) Son of Ferdinand's second son, who is dead, therefore heir in second degree ; succeeds to throne in Act II ; aged about twenty-six.

LUDWIG.

Son of Ferdinand's third son, who is also dead ; next heir to Philibert ; aged about twenty-five ; appears only in Act I.

BARON VON SOLLENSTIEGEL.

Chancellor of the Duchy ; aged about sixty.

VON REGENSCHIRM Lord Chamberlain

VON BLÜCK Field-Marshal

PRINCE OF SAXE-HOHENBURG-SCHLANGEWURTZ.

Father to Princess Wilhelmina ; appears only in Act I.

MONTGOMERY TABB.

An English newspaper correspondent.

POPOFF A Mine-layer.

BODLEY HEAD An English Poet.

ISIDOR.

Philibert's valet ; appears only in Act I.

A FOOTMAN.

A RUSSIAN OFFICER; *appears only in Act III.*

ADOLPHE.

VICTOR.

French students; appear only in Act II.

DUCHESS FERDINAND.

DUCHESS MAXIMILIAN.

PRINCESS WILHELMINA.

ZIZETTE.

GERMAINE.

FIFINE.

*Court ladies; Bridesmaids; Courtiers; Servants;
Waiters; Soldiers; Mob.*

ACT I.—*Ante-chamber of Grand Ducal Palace at
Norenfels.*

ACT II.—*Private room of Latin Quarter restaurant,
Paris.*

ACT III.—*Philibert's private sitting-room in the Grand
Ducal Palace at Norenfels.*

“*The Light Sovereign*”

Act I

An ante-chamber in the Grand Ducal Palace at Norenfels.

PHILIBERT; *morning costume, eyeglass.* A FOOTMAN.

PHIL. That will do.

FOOT. (*bowing low*) Thank you, your Highness.

PHIL. Mind you remember all I've told you.

FOOT. I quite understand, your Highness.

PHIL. You may go now.

FOOT. Your Highness's orders shall be carried out.

(PHIL., *with a yawn, throws himself at full length upon a sofa at bottom of stage, in which he is half concealed.* FOOTMAN *backs away towards door at left. Pauses, before exit.*)

FOOT. Poor young gentleman! Poor Prince Philibert!

He don't seem over and above cheerful for a young man on the morning of his wedding-day, he don't.

And him the heir to an independent Grand Dukedom too! Seems to have considerable of a hump.

Ah, well, princes is made of flesh and blood, like the rest of us; and I dunno as I'd feel particular light-hearted myself if I was agoing to marry the

Princess Wilhelmina.

PHIL. (*calling languidly*) Stodgers!

FOOT. Yes, your Highness.

PHIL. Are you still there?

FOOT. I am, your Highness.

PHIL. For goodness' sake, what are you waiting for?

FOOT. I was agoing over your Highness's orders, sir, to make sure of remembering them all, your Highness.

PHIL. Well, just kindly go and continue that intellectual exercise somewhere else. You disturb my meditations.

FOOT. Yes, your Highness. (*Exit left, repeating*) Poor Prince Philibert!

(*Enter TABB from right; frock-coat, top-hat on back of head, walking-stick; brilliantly new gloves. Walks briskly in, looking round, evidently searching for someone. Does not see PHILIBERT.*)

TABB. By Jove, where can the man be? (*Pulls out watch*) Another half-hour gone. Infernal nuisance. Send one wandering alone about this great barracks of a palace. Nobody to show you the way. No system, no order, no proper arrangements for the accommodation of the Press. Suppose I ring a bell? (*As he turns towards bell handle, he sees PHILIBERT, who slowly rises*) Hello! what's this? I wonder . . . (*Takes off hat, and approaches*) I beg your pardon, are you Baron von Sollenstiegel?

PHIL. (*pausing before answering, looking TABB up and down lazily, then dropping eyeglass, drawling plaintively*) My dear good man, now really! What is there in my appearance to warrant such a suspicion?

TABB. (*staring for a moment, perplexed; then aside*) Foiled again! I'm beginning to doubt whether

the Chancellor exists at all. (*Aloud*) Can you tell me where I'm likely to find him?

PHIL. (*with languid astonishment*) You can't really expect me to believe that you want to find Sollenstiegel?

TABB. (*excitedly*) Want to find him! I've been hunting for him this hour past. I'd give a five-pound note to find him. But nobody seems to know where he is. Everybody says, Not here—probably upstairs, downstairs, in the next room. They drive one from pillar to post. Beastly bore.

PHIL. Yes, he *is* a beastly bore. That's a very felicitous description. And the difficulty generally is not to find him but to keep out of his way. You don't *look* morbid; yet you really do want to find Sollenstiegel. Your voice has the ring of sincerity, your manner carries conviction. Tell me what has awakened such an abnormal craving?

TABB. (*staring again, aside*) H'm! Court fool, manifestly. (*Aloud*) The fact is, I am special Foreign Commissioner for the “London Bugle.” I want to interview Baron von Sollenstiegel about this wedding. (*Produces visiting card, and hands it to PHIL.*) Allow me—my card.

PHIL. Thank you, I'm sorry—I haven't got any of my cards with me; otherwise I'd return the compliment. (*Reading out*) “Mr. Montgomery Tabb, 46 Boulevard Haussmann, Paris.” Oh, do you live in Paris?

TABB. Yes, Paris is my headquarters. I

PHIL. Oh, you enviable mortal, you! Don't you like it awfully? Don't you find it immensely stimulating and suggestive? I wish *I* lived in Paris. If I ever go there I'll look you up; and you'll show me the town, won't you? (*Pockets card.*)

TABB. (*impatiently*) Very happy, I'm shaw. But for the present I'm pressed for time. *Can* you tell me where Baron von Sollenstiegel is? I *must* get my interview about the wedding

PHIL. (*stopping him, deprecatingly*) My dear good friend, calm yourself. It's painful beyond expression to see a strong healthy man like you convulsed by an unnatural appetite. I assure you I'm ever so much more entertaining than Sollenstiegel is. Try to put Sollenstiegel from your mind; and tell me all about Paris.

TABB. (*with frantic gestures, moving nervously to and fro*) My good sir, the wedding! the *wedding!* I'm here to write up the wedding. I can't spend my time talking nonsense with Tom, Dick, and Harry. I've got to

PHIL. (*soothingly*) There, there! Don't be cross. Don't get excited. *What* wedding?

TABB. (*losing all patience*) What wedding! I like that. What wedding! Good heavens! *The* wedding—the Royal wedding, about which the whole place is in a stew. Streets packed with people—flags flying—bells ringing—triumphal arches—

illuminations—Chinese lanterns—squibs—rockets !
What wedding, indeed !

PHIL. Oh, pray, pray be calm. Perhaps you mean
Philibert’s wedding ?

TABB. Perhaps ! Perhaps ! What else am I likely
to mean ? What else do you imagine would have
brought me to Norenfels ? The marriage of Prince
Philibert to Princess Wilhelmina of Saxe-Hohenburg-
Schlangewurtz, of course.

PHIL. Oh, I see. To be sure. Well—do you know ?
I dare say I could tell you a good deal about that.

TABB. (*eagerly*) What ? (*Puts hat, gloves, and walking-
stick on table, whips out note-book, and buttonholes*
PHIL.) Can you ? Can you ?

PHIL. (*looking languidly from TABB to note-book, and
speaking half incredulously*) Are you going to take
it down ?

TABB. Of course, of course. Now then . . . (*Finds
place in note-book, taps stylo, prepares to write.*)

PHIL. (*while TABB is making ready*) What awful fun !
Excuse me—I must see that there aren’t any eaves-
droppers. (*Goes on tip-toe to the various doors—opens
them suddenly—looks behind chairs and under tables—
finding no one, comes back.*) Sorry to keep you waiting,
but you have no idea how many ears these walls
have ; and as I feel that I am going to betray all
sorts of confidences and things, I must take pre-
cautions. Prudence is the better part of indiscre-
tion.

TABB. Oh, you are quite right to be on your guard.
(Beginning to write) H'm, to begin with, do you know
 the parties ?

PHIL. *(sighing profoundly)* Intimately. Hence my tears.
 If I had never known them I should be a very
 different man.

TABB. *(fervently)* Good, by Jove! Attached to the
 Court, I suppose? Gentleman-in-waiting, eh?
 Well, now, about the Prince. Can you give me a
 short character-sketch of him ?

PHIL. Charles Augustus Adolphus George Alexander
 Frederick Leopold Philibert? Oh! he's a beauti-
 ful joke.

TABB. Joke? How?

PHIL. Bored to death, don't you know. Dying of ennui.
 Hates it all. Writes verses. Reads Balzac—really
 reads him. Thinks of bolting. Tremendous fun.

TABB. *(writing rapidly)* Not so fast, please; not quite
 so fast. Writes verses. Yes—go on.

PHIL. *(mechanically repeating)* Writes verses, reads
 Balzac, thinks of bolting, tremendous

TABB. *(stopping him, perplexed, note-book suspended)*
 What's that? Thinks of bolting? How do you
 mean?

PHIL. Yes, taking French leave, getting out of the
 country, emigrating, chucking the whole thing.
 Going to Paris, or Buenos Ayres, or somewhere.
 My native land, good-night. *(Changes his tone,
 becoming oratorical)* Philibert, I must tell you, is a

modern of the moderns ; and, as an observer of current events—you *are* an observer of current events, aren't you ?

TABB. (*impatiently*) Yes, yes, it's my profession to be. Go on.

PHIL. As an observer of current events, you will doubtless have noticed that one of the most characteristic manifestations, as well as one of the most manifest characteristics, of modernity is a tendency to emigrate—to quit the paternal homestead and to push on into ever-broadening vistas of new experience. This spirit has been happily named by a German philosopher the *Auswanderungsgeist* ; and Philibert has been bitten by it. It is not every spirit that can bite.

TABB. (*more and more perplexed*) I don't think I quite understand. You mean

PHIL. Yes, exactly. Philibert hates it all. Hatred, that direst emotion to which flesh is heir, has curdled the milk of human kindness in his bosom. He hates Norenfels, he hates the Court, he hates the life here—he finds it dull. There's nobody to read his verses to, you see. He pines for a little interesting human society, a little excitement. He hates the etiquette, the fuss and feathers, the red cloth, in which all the spontaneous impulses of his soul are stifled. He hates the shameless, abandoned, consuming middle-class respectability of it all. He hates laying foundation stones, opening bazaars, presiding at mothers'

meetings. He hates old Sollenstiegel, hates German cooking, hates the National Anthem. He's tired of it. He's heard it a dozen times a day ever since it welcomed him into his swaddling-clothes a quarter of a century ago, and it's not an exhilarating melody at its best. In fine and above all things, he hates this marriage. He doesn't want to get married, wants to go away—Paris, anywhere, and have a fling.

TABB. (*who has been writing hard, looking up, very seriously*) Can I trust the information you are giving me as thoroughly reliable?

PHIL. Absolutely. You can trust it as if you had it directly from the Prince himself. Besides, doesn't it sound intrinsically probable? Hasn't it the sterling ring of truth? Put yourself in his place. If you were young and charming, and had a great bagful of wild oats to sow, and a burning curiosity about life and human nature, and an intense longing to see the world and to have a few adventures, and experiences, and flirtations, and things—how would *you* like to be poked away in a third-rate German provincial town—where everybody goes to bed at nine o'clock—and there are no cafés, or music halls, or public balls, or pretty women, or amusing men; and forced to live the tedious, methodical, ceremonious life of a third-rate German princeling, eternally surrounded and bothered and criticised and ordered about by third-rate German courtiers, and doomed to hear the

National Anthem played by a third-rate German band every time you turned round? Don't you think you'd be bitten by the *Auswanderungsgeist*?

TABB. (*writing hard*) Yes, yes—I see, I see—(*writing, trying to catch up*) *Aus-wand-erungs-geist*. There, I've got that. (*Drawing long breath of relief*) Thank you very much. Most interesting revelations. Fatal consequences of a regular life. And so, to come back to the marriage, it is not one of affection? The Prince is not in love with his bride-elect?

PHIL. In love with her? Bless my soul! Have you seen her?

TABB. No, but I've seen her photograph. Charming lady.

PHIL. Ah, but you know what photographs are—especially photographs of German princesses. She's not a bit like her photograph. There's all the difference between a retouched negative and a categorical affirmative.

TABB. (*writing, catching up*) 'Gorical affirmative.

PHIL. She's early undecorated Gothic, which is very good style for cathedrals and public buildings, but you'd scarcely like it in the lady you're to make your wife, would you? All angles and things. Mouth like a pointed arch, nose like a flying buttress.

TABB. (*writing, catching up*) Like—a—flying buttress. Yes.

PHIL. Besides, she's a Philistine. She doesn't care for Debussy, or Harland, or Haraucourt, or Willette,

or Réjane, or Hokusai, or Botticelli, or Verlaine, or Holy Mother Church, or anything nice and up-to-date and cultivated. . . . Philibert dotes on them.

TABB. (*writing, catching up*) Dotes on 'em. Yes, I see. Then it's just the usual Royal

PHIL. Excuse me—semi-royal.

TABB. I beg your pardon—the usual semi-royal matrimonial arrangement? Bit of politics, eh? Bride and bridegroom sacrifice their private sentiments to the interests of the State?

PHIL. That's it, that's it precisely. It's old Sollenstiegel's affair. He manages everything here, you know. He's Prime Minister—Leader of the House—Chairman of the County Council—Grand Vizier. He rules the reigning family with a hand of iron. The poor old Duke's life is passed in signing bills he heartily disapproves of. But that's the bother of Constitutional Government. Sollenstiegel represents the Nonconformist Conscience. He wouldn't let the Duke accept the Order of the Garter, because he says garters are indelicate; and he wants to make everybody in the Duchy wear blue spectacles, because it shocks his modesty to think of the naked eye. He's a horrid old fussy sanctimonious martinet—that's why I was hurt when you asked me if I was he.

TABB. Pray accept my apologies.

PHIL. Don't mention it. Well, Sollenstiegel is deter-

mined to get Philibert married, so that there shall be another heir.

TABB. (*writing*) Another heir. Yes—go on. (PHIL. *hesitates*.) Just give me a rapid *précis* of the situation as regards the succession, please. There’s the reigning Grand Duke Ferdinand the Eighteenth . . .

PHIL. Quite so. An aged, feeble potentate, well meaning, but dyspeptic. Always complaining of his digestion—wears his stomach on his sleeve. He’s married to his third wife, Sophia Philipina, a tedious, stout old lady, of the tea-and-muffin-pious sort; spends her evenings working slippers for the Archbishop, and her mornings reading sermons to her Maids-of-Honour. Then

TABB. (*writing*) One moment, please. Yes, and then ?

PHIL. Then there’s the old Duke’s son Maximilian—stiff old military chap—wooden soldier. He’s been married twenty years, but has no children. So the next is poor dear Philibert, a son of old Duke’s younger son, who’s dead.

TABB. (*writing*) Yes, yes ; go on. And after Philibert ?
If Philibert should have no children ?

PHIL. A damned fool named Ludwig comes next.

TABB. (*writing*) Damned fool. Yes, I’ve got that.

PHIL. Son of still younger son of old Duke, who’s also dead. A horrid hypocritical psalm-singing humbug ; the good boy of the family. Spends his whole time casting his eyes up to heaven, and calculating his chances to the throne. Philibert hates him ; but

that's only natural, for they're first cousins, and Philibert is a model of the natural family feelings. But hark! I hear footsteps. (*Goes to door at left, and listens. Comes back.*) Yes—we're going to be interrupted. I'm very sorry, but it would never do for me to be caught betraying State secrets to the Press.

TABB. (*shutting note-book*) Well, I'm sure I'm greatly obliged to you. I think I've got all I wanted. (*Producing five-pound note*) Allow me. (*Offers note to PHIL.*)

PHIL. What's that?

TABB. Your fee. We pay the people we interview at the rate of two pounds ten a thousand words.

PHIL. (*taking and pocketing note*) Oh! thank you. I am not mercenary, but it is always pleasant to receive money one feels one has honestly earned.

(*Enter DUKE, DUCHESS, DUKE MAX., DUCHESS MAX., LUDWIG, AND LADIES AND GENTLEMEN OF THE COURT; men in full uniform, orders, etc., women all plain.*)

TABB. (*falling back respectful distance*) The Court, by Jingo!

DUKE. (*very old, leaning on stick*) Ah, good morning, Philibert! Why weren't you at breakfast? We had some very nice smoked haddock. But I'm afraid I ought not to have eaten it. I've got a miserable gnawing in my stomach.

PHIL. I wasn't hungry, Grandpa. I had a cup of tea and

a little dry toast in my room. (*Exchanges salutations with others.*)

TABB. (*aside*) Philibert? Grandpa? By the Lord Harry! I must rush to the telegraph office. (*Exit hurriedly.*)

DUKE. Ah, if youth would, if age could! If I were young again, and had *your* digestion, I'd breakfast in the American fashion. I'd have rump-steak and boiled potatoes, and curried lamb and devilled kidneys, and strawberries, and cabinet pudding, and just a little cheese, Cheddar or Stilton, and pulled-bread, to top up with. Youth never grasps its opportunities; dyspeptic age remembers them with impotent regret. (*Sighs profoundly.*)

PHIL. I quite appreciate the melancholy of your reflections, Grandpa; and I beg to assure you of my respectful sympathy.

DUKE. (*with hand on stomach, in pain*) Thank you, my lad.

DUCH. But what is vastly more important than breakfast, Philibert, I noticed you were not present at family prayers. Your cousin Ludwig (*indicating LUDWIG, who bows*) never misses family prayers. Though you are both *de jure* only my step-grandchildren, you know that *de facto* you are my own flesh and blood . . .

LUDWIG. (*devoutly*) Dear Grandmother!

PHIL. (*imitating LUDWIG, and throwing great fervour into the word "didactic," which he knows the Duchess*

won't understand, but will take as a compliment)
Dear didactic Grandma!

*(Throughout this Court scene the various person-
ages who lecture PHILIBERT pay, for the most
part, no attention to his replies; even when
they ask questions they scarcely appear to
expect answers, their desire being to talk at him,
not to hear his defence. So his impertinent
interjections are in the nature of asides directed
at the audience.)*

DUCH. Pretty speeches are all very well; but, Philibert,
if you neglect these serious matters in the green wood,
what will you come to in the dry?

PHIL. *(absently, musingly, as if to himself, unheeded by
the others)* The dry wood? The green wood? *(Then
with a bright smile and flash of imbecile inspiration)*
Under the greenwood tree!

DUKE. I dare say the youngster is feeling a bit nervous;
and no wonder. This is a great moment, Philibert;
the most decisive moment of your life. I've been
through it three times, and therefore speak from
knowledge. Also, a relatively important dynastic
juncture—isn't it, Maxie? *(Putting hand on MAX.'s
head; other hand on PHIL.'s shoulder.)*

MAX. Yes, Papa; the most important since I myself
was married.

DUCH. M. *(sentimentally, taking MAX.'s arm)* Ah, good hus-
band! and do you still sometimes think of that event-
ful day, when your wee wifie was a blushing bride?

MAX. (*very matter of fact*) It is my rule always to do so on occasions like the present.

LUDWIG. (*ingratiatingly*) Oh, Uncle! Oh, Auntie! What a pattern of matrimonial felicity. Oh, happy, happy pair!

PHIL. (*wool-gathering, dreamily, half to himself, always unheeded by others*) Happy pair! Happy pair! (*Then with sudden association of ideas*) None but the brave deserve the fair.

DUKE. (*to PHIL.*) I hope, Grandson, that you realise the full gravity of the responsibilities you are assuming?

PHIL. (*reflectively*) Yes—I think I do. (*Then airily, cheerfully*) But they’ll soon be over. I’m philosopher enough to know that no man’s life can be all beer and skittles.

MAX. (*to PHIL.*) True; a very accurate observation, more especially applicable to military men. I was grieved to miss you from six o’clock drill this morning. Your cousin Ludwig never absents himself from early drill.

PHIL. (*stifling a yawn, absently*) Cousin Ludwig . . . Early drill . . . Early worm . . . Early drill . . . catches the wise man asleep.

DUKE. I trust you will remember the claims of the Church, Philibert. As a married man, it will be incumbent upon you to be regular in your attendance in the family pew.

PHIL. (*always absently, unheeded*) The pew, the pew; distance lends enchantment to the pew.

LUDWIG. (*to PHIL.*) Who was the person you were talking with when we came in ?

PHIL. An English gentleman, a Mr. Tabb, a literary man who lives in Paris. I was giving him a little information. Are you a subscriber to Romeike's ?

DUCH. A literary man ? Paris ? I trust, Philibert, that now, as you are about to marry and settle down, you'll give up reading those abominable French novels you're so fond of. They're not fit reading for any one—least of all for a young married man. *I've* never looked at one of them, nor has your cousin Ludwig, I'm sure.

LUDWIG. Never, never ; I hope I have too much self-respect to sully my mind with their atrocious . . . improprieties.

PHIL. (*to LUDWIG, sympathetically*) Of course, of course, old chap. And then—French is so difficult, isn't it ?

DUCH. M. *I'd* rather die than read one. Their horrid yellow covers are enough. Yellow is such an unblushing colour. A yellow book is sure to be immoral.

DUCH. F. (*pompously, weighing her words*) A French novelist is a man who spends his life in . . . in . . . (*hesitates for word*)

PHIL. (*cheerily*) In adorning a tale, Grandma ; just as you spend yours in pointing a moral.

MAX. The only proper reading for a young man, who, like yourself, will be called upon eventually to

occupy one of the most select thrones in Europe, is military literature: the Army List, the Dictionary of Uniforms, the Theory and Practice of Parades.

DUKE. And Blue Books, Blue Books; you should always have the latest Blue Book on your list for Smith.

PHIL. Ah, but Smith won't circulate it, you know!

DUKE. Never mind, never mind; then try Mudie. Don't quibble. And Precedence—there's a world of advantage to be derived from a thorough grounding in Precedence; and it's the best possible mental discipline, too. Now, can you tell me, for instance, where the eldest sons of viscounts' younger sons will march in your wedding procession? With the levelling tendencies that are abroad in the land, every Sovereign should qualify himself to act as his own Master of Ceremonies in the case of emergencies.

PHIL. (*with a dim reminiscence of the manner of Mr. TABB*) Yes, yes—I've got that. Go on.

(*Enter SOLLENSTIEGEL, full uniform, covered with orders, bustling forward importantly. The whole Court, except PHILIBERT, instinctively fall into position, as if for inspection.*)

PHIL. Hello, here's old Sol! (*Half to audience*) The great man trots up, covered with medals, tinkling like a silent-tyred hansom.

SOL. (*walking rapidly up and down, looking everybody critically over*) Good—good—very good. (*To DUKE*) Your Highness's sword a little more to the side,

please. (*Arranges DUKE's sword*) That's better. (*To LUDWIG*) Your Highness's belt needs tightening up a bit. (*LUDWIG tightens belt.*) That will do—one hole is sufficient. (*Reaches PHILIBERT, balts*) How's this? Your Highness not dressed yet?

PHIL. What's the use of asking questions when the answers are obvious?

(*The Court exchange horrified glances whenever PHILIBERT speaks impertinently to SOL.*)

SOL. But this will never do. You'll be late. (*Unbuttons coat; after much fumbling produces enormous silver watch*) Half-past eleven! Your Highness will barely have time. How often have I tried to impress upon your Highness's mind the value of time. Time . . .

PHIL. (*interrupting*) Oh, bother time! Time was made for slaves. I am intimately familiar with all that you can have to say on the subject of time. Choose a fresh topic and begin again.

SOL. Your Highness's levity on this auspicious occasion is unbecoming. Punctuality, says the proverb, is the politeness of kings; and, as we all know, Royalties are proverbially punctual . . .

PHIL. But it's the fashion nowadays to invert proverbs.

SOL. Your Highness's logic is vitiated by the fallacy of a *non sequitur*. In any case you mustn't keep the Princess waiting, to say nothing of the Archbishop, the Clergy, and the invited guests. Go at once and put on the full-dress uniform of Honorary Major of

the Fifteenth Imperial Marines. (*Hands PHILIBERT a voluminous document*) Here is a memorandum of the orders you are to wear. I've prepared it myself with the assistance of the Master of Ceremonies and his staff. It's most important that they should be worn as I've directed. Grave diplomatic issues hang upon it. Your Highness will have to look sharp.

PHIL. (*taking document and gazing at it ruefully; petulantly*) You are so tiresome. However, I'll do what I can.

SOL. (*to Court, in tone of officer commanding*) Now then! To the terrace! The bride will be arriving.

(*Exit Court at right.*)

(PHILIBERT *alone, looks utterly dejected; sighs profoundly, rings bell, flings himself into arm-chair; yawns. Enter FOOTMAN.*)

FOOT. Your Highness rang?

PHIL. Send Isidor here. (*Exit SERVANT*) No, I'll be hanged if I can do it. My mind is quite made up. I must be resolute, I must be energetic, I must bolt. (*A short pause*) I say, what a pleasant surprise that must have been for Mr. Tabb!—And what a surprise it will be for Sollenstiegel and the family when they see it all in the papers. Now I know how history is written. Nobody ever prepares nice little surprises for me. I'll look Mr. Tabb up when I get to Paris, and he'll show me the town. Ah, Wilhelmina, Wilhelmina! You are the last straw. I'll take the 12.22 (*looking at watch*) for the frontier, and there'll

be no bridegroom at the wedding breakfast. "The minstrel boy to the war is gone!" "He cometh not, she said." Won't old Sol be in a fury, though! (*Imitating SOL's tone*) "Now then! To the terrace!" (*Enter ISIDOR*) Ah, Isidor, look at that. (*Hands ISIDOR document.*)

ISIDOR. (*studying document, dubiously*) I'm afraid it can't be done, your Highness.

PHIL. Can't be done? What do you mean?

ISIDOR. I'm afraid your Highness can't get them on.

PHIL. (*peevishly*) But I must get them on. Grave diplomatic issues hang upon it.

ISIDOR. It's a question of space, your Highness. (*Goes up to PHILIBERT and measures off his breast with fingers, calculating*) No, sir, it can't be done. This is planned out for a gentleman of the figure of Baron von Sollenstiegel, sir. Your Highness hasn't sufficient expanse—not by several inches. Of course we could put the Blue Vulture and the Brazen Crown below the belt; but that might give offence and lead to international complications.

PHIL. It would be sure to. You're certain you can't arrange them as indicated there?

ISIDOR. Positive, your Highness.

PHIL. Ah, well! then, never mind! It's evident I can't get married. Grave diplomatic issues are at stake. It's most important I should wear them as Sollenstiegel has directed. I can't, I won't, disturb the peace of Europe. It's too great a responsibility. Go and pack my bag instead.

ISIDOR. Pack your Highness's bag ?

PHIL. Yes, my Gladstone, and take it to the station.

I'll meet you there in time for the 12.22. No use my stopping here if I can't get married. We'll go to Paris, sirrah, and amuse ourselves incog. Put in all you think necessary. I doubt if we shall be coming home again for some little time. We'll go to the Chat Noir and the Moulin Rouge and the Bois de Boulogne and we'll look up Mr. Tabb; and we'll live in the Latin Quarter under an assumed name; and we'll drink absinthe; and we'll get acquainted with all the decadent poets; and we'll have a ripping old time; (*sings*) “a tearing time, a swearing time, a slap-bang devil-may-caring-time.” Now, look alive; don't tell a soul, and mind you're not late for the train.

ISIDOR. Ah, no fear, no fear, your Highness! I'll pack everything and slip out of the Palace by the garden, and await your Highness on the platform. (*Exit ISIDOR.*)

PHIL. (*sitting down at table where there are writing materials*) It will be seemly, methinks, to leave a last little word of farewell. Parting is such sweet sorrow. (*Writes a couple of lines, folds paper, puts it in envelope and addresses it.*) “Dear old Sol, By the time this reaches you I shall be far from Norenfels. Sudden business imperiously demands my presence at the Antipodes. My kind regards to the Princess Wilhelmina. Forgive and forget. Yours etc. Philibert.” “To the Right Honourable Baron von

Sollenstiegel, P.C." (*Looks about, and pins note to back of conspicuous armchair.*) There—it will be sure to be seen there. (*Music of band without. Air: " 'E dunno w'ere 'e are.'*) Oh, the National Anthem! That must be my fiancée arriving. I dare say she'll be vexed, poor dear. I'll write to her from Paris. (*Exit.*)

(*Interval, during which band, continuing to play, draws nearer and nearer; then enters from Right, always playing. Court, headed by SOLLENSTIEGEL, follows band; includes WILHELMINA, in full bridal attire, leaning on her father's arm, supported by her bridesmaids. Music ceases when all are on stage.*)

SOL. (*espying PHILIBERT'S note from afar*) Ah, what is this? (*Approaches*) A note? (*Approaches nearer and sees superscription*) For me! (*Plucks note from chair and reads superscription*). "The Right Honourable Baron von Sollenstiegel, P.C." (*The Court have halted, behind him.*) Who can it be from? (*Turns note over and over*) Very odd, very strange, a note for me, pinned to a chair. (*Tears open, glances at it; brow clouds. After a moment's reflection turns to Court, and announces*) A very curious complication has arisen. (*Sensation among Court.*)

DUKE. What is it?

MAX. (*anxiously*) What has happened?

SOL. I have here a communication from the hand of Prince Philibert.

DUKE. Well ? Well ?

MAX. Go on.

PRINCE. What is it ?

SOL. It contains a very lamentable announcement.

(Sensation among Court becomes greater. All look eagerly to SOL., buzzing with curiosity.)

SOL. I hardly know how to break the sad intelligence to you.

PRINCE. Come ! Come ! Out with it !

DUKE. Yes, yes ; out with it !

SOL. *(After hesitation, blurts out to DUKE)* Your grandson, Prince Philibert, has quitted your Highness's dominions.

(Enormous sensation.)

PRINCE. Quitted Norenfels !

MAX. Quitted our dominions !

DUKE. What ? What ? What ? *(Goes up to SOL.)*
Let me see, let me see. *(Takes note and reads it.)*

PRINCE. Well ?

MAX. Well ? *(DUKE hands him note, which he reads.)*

PRINCE. *(to DUKE)* What does this mean ? I insist upon an immediate explanation.

DUKE. *(embarrassed)* Alas, alas, dear Cousin of Saxe-Hohenburg-Schlangewurtz, what my Chancellor has told us appears to be too true ! In a fit of temporary insanity my grandson has gone abroad.

(PRINCESS WILHELMINA, with a scream, falls back half-fainting into the arms of her bridesmaids, who fan her and hold scent-bottles to her nose.)

PRINCE. Gone? Abroad? Where?

DUKE. (*stammering, much embarrassed*) Unfortunately I regret to say I am afraid The fact is he has left no address. We have only the vaguest

MAX. (*coming to his father's relief*) He intimates in a general way that his final destination will be the Antipodes.

PRINCE. (*furiously*) This is a pretty pass! And my daughter? What of my daughter?

DUKE. I'm sure we're all very sorry.

MAX. Very sorry, indeed.

PRINCE. Sorry! Sorry! Regrets are all very well. But what is to be done?

DUKE. I'm afraid—I'm afraid the wedding will have to be postponed.

PRINCE. Postponed? Not a bit of it. I'll hear of no postponement. My daughter is here to be married. I've had all the expense of her trousseau, the bridesmaids' dresses, and the special train that brought us to Norenfels. If I have to take her home unmarried, I shall make the incident a *casus belli*.

DUKE. Ah, don't do that!

MAX. Don't do that, don't do that!

PRINCE. (*stamping his foot*) Useless to plead with me. That is my ultimatum.

(DUKE and DUKE MAX. turn from PRINCE in despair; are joined by their wives; and all four appeal to SOLLENSTIEGEL.)

DUKE. Sollenstiegel, Sollenstiegel !

MAX. What is to be done ?

DUCH. F. Good Baron von Sollenstiegel !

DUCH. M. Wise Baron von Sollenstiegel !

SOL. It is a critical situation, a crisis of no ordinary importance. But it is my duty to cope with it ; and for thirty years I have never faltered when the voice of Duty called. All the best energies of my intellect are at your disposal ; but you must give me a moment for meditation. (*Bows his head in attitude of profound reflection, whilst all wait attentive. WILHELMINA is meanwhile recovering. Presently SOL. raises head, and speaks*) I had, perhaps, best preface my remarks by reminding you that the government of Norenfels is constitutional. And let me also direct your attention to the fact that in another neighbouring constitutional monarchy we have recent and brilliant precedents, a consideration of which may help us to a determination in the present dilemma. The Princess Wilhelmina, as her august father has so acutely observed, is here to be married ; she is accompanied by her bridesmaids ; she is provided with an abundant trousseau. And should she be compelled to return hence a spinster, His Highness has, as I think we must all feel, very properly resolved to appeal to the arbitrament of arms. Therefore, not only the honour, but even the peace and safety of Norenfels are imperilled ; and during the thirty years that it has been my privilege to stand at the helm of

the Ship of State I have never hesitated to throw myself into the breach when the necessities of Norenfels summoned me. Is Baron von Sollenstiegel to falter now? No—ten thousand times, no! (*To DUKE*) Your Highness may count upon his faithful servant. (*To PRINCE S.H.S.*) Your Highness, it would be the proudest moment of my life if you could see your way to allowing me, humble, unassuming, but not unimportant subject though I am, to conduct the gracious Princess Wilhelmina to the altar.

(Sensation on part of Court. Signs of relief in DUKES and DUCHESES.)

DUKE. We knew, devoted Councillor, that you would not fail us. (*To PRINCE*) Cousin of Saxe-Hohenburg-Schlangewurtz, permit me to lend all the weight of my influence to Baron von Sollenstiegel's lofty but not audacious aspirations.

PRINCE. (*after reflection*) I cannot pretend that this is such an alliance as entirely satisfies my paternal instincts; however, in an emergency one must not be too fastidious. Daughter! (*WILHELMINA approaches; PRINCE takes her hand and places it in SOLLENSTIEGEL'S*) In betrothing you to this worthy man, whom you must already respect, and will, perhaps, learn to love, I can only express the hope that he will give you all your merits deserve. (*Holding hands over their heads*) Children, receive my benediction.

(Band strikes up National Anthem. Curtain.)

Act II

A year is supposed to elapse between Acts I. and II.

The Scene is a private room in a Latin Quarter Restaurant. PHILIBERT, ZIZETTE, POPOFF, BODLEY HEAD, VICTOR, ADOLPHE, FIFINE, GERMAINE are breakfasting together. Breakfast ends as curtain rises. All get up from table, laughing.

VICTOR. Ha! ha! Capital story! Well, I must be going. (*To PHILIBERT*) Ta, ta, Phipps, old chap. See you at Bullier's to-night, I suppose? (*He and PHIL. shake hands*) Come along, Fifine.

PHIL. Good-bye. Sorry you can't stay.

(*VICTOR crosses to ZIZETTE. FIFINE goes up to PHILIBERT, and they chat together, laughing.*)

VICTOR. (*to ZIZETTE*) Au revoir, madame.

ZIZETTE. Ta, ta, mon vieux.

FIFINE. (*to PHILIBERT*) Good-bye, Mr. Phipps.

PHIL. Good-bye. (*They shake hands.*)

FIFINE. (*to ZIZETTE*) Bonjour, madame.

ZIZETTE. Au revoir, madame.

(*Exeunt VICTOR and FIFINE, nodding and waving hands to others.*)

ADOL. Very jolly breakfast you gave us, Phipps. Wish it was the anniversary of your arrival in the Quarter

every day. Well, I must toddle, too. Dare say we'll meet at the d'Harcourt this afternoon, at the absinthe hour.

PHIL. Dare say. Sorry you can't stop. Good-bye.

(They shake hands. ADOLPHE turns to ZIZETTE, and takes leave of her, while GERMAINE crosses to PHILIBERT.)

GERMAINE. Good-bye, Mr. Phipps. Thank you very much.

PHIL. Bonjour, Germaine.

(Exeunt ADOLPHE and GERMAINE, nodding to others.)

PHIL. Regular sa^uve-qui-peut! The dear, rash youngsters will be off to work, in spite of the fact that it's most unhealthy to work between meals. But *(to POPOFF and BODLEY HEAD)* you fellows will stop a bit. What will you have to drink? You, Popoff, as President of the Tenth Section of the International Guild of Affiliated Mine-layers, do you think you could reconcile it with your principles to have a little . . .

POPOFF. Rum and water. Yes, I think I could.

PHIL. So nice of you. And you, dear Bodley?

HEAD. *(affectedly, scanning his phrases)* Green chartreuse, please. It is the proper beverage for poets. In colour it is like an emerald dissolved in tears; in flavour, like the mingled ghosts of innumerable wild flowers, and its name is as melodious and as suggestive as a Lightmotive from Gounod. *(Beating time*

with his hand) Green chartreuse—chartreuse verte—
chartreuse—euse—euse !

PHIL. (*declaiming*) :

“ I only knew one poet in my life,
And this, or something like it, was his way ! ”

(*to ZIZETTE*) That’s from Browning, Zizette ; a hated rival of our own dear Bodley Head. What will you take ?

ZIZETTE. A small bottle of aerated lemonade—(*imitating* BODLEY HEAD) ade—ade—ade. In colour it is—h’m—nothing much to boast of, don’t you know ; in flavour it is—h’m—like the mingled ghosts of innumerable pins and needles, dissolved in sugar and water ; and its stimulating and digestive properties have earned for it a hundred unmerited testimonials from all classes of the community. (*Laughs and makes a little face at BODLEY HEAD.*)

HEAD. Why do you mock me, beauteous lady ? I cannot help it, if I was born a poet. It is my nature to see all things in a poetic light, and to clothe my most commonplace thoughts in poetic language. Besides, though you might not suspect it from my manner, I have a keen sense of humour and a scintillating wit. I lisped in inverted proverbs ; and my ingenious paradoxes have become household words from the Boule-Miche unto the remotest suburbs.

PHIL. (*pounding table*) Waiter ! garçon !

WAITER. (*without*) V’là, m’sieur. (*He enters*) (PHILIBERT *aside gives his orders to WAITER, who goes off.*

Meanwhile POPOFF produces short, black pipe, fills and lights it.)

POPOFF. (*answering BODLEY HEAD while PHILIBERT is giving orders to WAITER*) Inverted proverbs, inverted commas—these are the chief instruments of your profession. But, my dear friend, inversion is the first principle of Mine-laying. That's all we want to do—to invert things in general. Don't you see that consistency demands your enrolment in our band?

ZIZETTE. (*to POPOFF*) But if you want to invert everything, why don't you see that consistency demands that you should put the lighted end of your pipe into your mouth? By the way, Philibert, give me a cigarette. (*PHILIBERT offers her packet of ordinary Caporal cigarettes.*)

HEAD. (*producing handsome silver cigarette-case*) Try one of these, fair lady. They're Egyptians. They were rolled by brown-fingered, purple-mouthed Arabian girls, in the shadow of the Pyramids, of tobacco grown on the sunlit slopes of Asia Minor. All the magic and mystery of the Orient are in their aroma.

ZIZETTE. Are you quite sure of it?

HEAD. I am morally certain.

ZIZETTE. Thank you. I'll try one of each. (*Taking cigarettes*) Oblige me with a light—oblige me with *two* lights. (*HEAD strikes wax match on silver match-box and holds it while she lights her Egyptian. PHILIBERT, who has lighted a Caporal for himself, holds it while she lights hers from it. She puffs alternately one and*

then the other, tasting smoke critically, and blowing that of Egyptian into HEAD's face, that of Caporal into PHILIBERT's.)

HEAD. (*closing his eyes ecstatically*) Ah! it is sweeter than frankincense and myrrh. It is like the smoke of smouldering un-kissed kisses.

(Enter WAITER, with glasses, followed by VERSEUR, who fills them. Exeunt WAITER and VERSEUR.)

PHIL. Well, children, here's to you. (*They clink glasses.*)

ZIZETTE. (*smacking her lips*) Oh! but this is good! (*To PHILIBERT*) Taste it. (*She holds her glass to PHILIBERT's lips; he sips from it. She takes PHILIBERT's glass, sips, makes a face*) Ugh, what horrid stuff! (*Sips more*) How can you drink it? (*Empties glass, and hands it back*) Villainous! (*To HEAD*) Yours is much nicer. Let me taste. (*Sipping*) H'm, yes, not bad (*empties glass*).

HEAD. One moment. I'm sure there's a familiar quotation peculiarly appropriate to this occasion, which I should be able to invert. (*Pauses, finger on brow, trying to think*) No, I can't remember it. I'm awfully sorry. It would have been so pat.

(While HEAD pauses, trying to think, they all wait eagerly. When he confesses that he can't remember, they sink back in their places, disappointed.)

ZIZETTE. Oh!

PHIL. Ah!

POPOFF. What a pity!

HEAD. I'm so sorry to have raised false hopes. But don't be discouraged. I'll try again, later on.

ZIZETTE. Thank you.

PHIL. So good of you.

POPOFF. (*wringing HEAD's hand*) Brave heart! Bright, brave young heart! Man can but try—you tried your best. You will try again—undaunted by defeat, and not too much elated by victory.

HEAD. (*much moved*) Thank you, thank you. It is worth suffering to inspire such sympathy. I shall strive always to preserve a becoming modesty in success, and to seem cock-a-whoop in failure.

(*Enter TABB looking very important.*)

PHIL. Hulloo! Here's old Tabby! What brings you to the Latin Quarter at this unconventional hour?

TABB. Looking for *you*. Been hunting for you all over the place the whole morning. (*To ZIZETTE*) Bon jour, madame. (*Nods to POPOFF and HEAD.*)

PHIL. How flattering! But sit down, old Tabb. What'll you have?

TABB. I'd like a word apart with you—five minutes' confidential chat. I want to give you a little information and get a little copy.

ZIZETTE. (*curiously*) What is it all about?

TABB. It's a matter for Mr. Phipps's private ear.

ZIZETTE. Oh! bother! What's the use of making mysteries. We're all friends here, you know. Tell us,

tell us, tell us; besides, I'll be sure to worm it from him directly we're alone—won't I, Phil?

PHIL. A strange presentiment warns me that you will.

TABB. Ah! well, if he chooses to tell you, that'll be his affair.

ZIZETTE. You're a horrid old thing.

(TABB draws PHILIBERT, who has risen, to the front of stage, ZIZETTE calling after them.)

ZIZETTE. I say, old chap.

PHIL. What?

ZIZETTE. Since Mr. Tabb chooses to be so intensely disagreeable, I'm going to take these fellows (indicating POPOFF and BODLEY HEAD) out for a stroll on the boulevards. We'll come back.

(*Exeunt* ZIZETTE, POPOFF, and BODLEY HEAD.)

PHIL. Well, Tabby?

TABB. Well, your Highness. . .

PHIL. Highness? Hush! I thought you promised to treat that as a secret which you'd learned by hazard, and are bound by honour never to refer to. Have I not done enough to live it down? Is it generous to be perpetually flinging a man's past at his head, and taunting him with the accident of his birth? Besides, if anyone should hear? Don't you remember, when I looked you up on my arrival in Paris, and you began to exclaim about Highnesses and things, I assured you that I was no longer high, that I was an altered man, and that I had determined to lead a new, a different life, upon a much

lower and more amusing plane? Didn't I implore you to treat the dark incidents of my early history as if they had never been?

TABB. Quite so. And I think I may claim to have respected your confidence religiously. But circumstances alter cases

PHIL. I know a solicitor, on the contrary, who maintains that cases alter circumstances. Bodley ought to have said that.

TABB. Ha! Yes. Very good. At another time I should be delighted to render your Highness's wit the tribute of a smile. But this is no occasion for jesting. I've come on extremely serious business.

PHIL. Oh, don't be tiresome, Tabby. Don't check my unrestrained flow of simple mirth with ill-timed seriousness. If you want to be serious, go somewhere else, and come back when you've worked it off.

TABB. I am sorry to seem importunate, but I really must insist upon a hearing. For the past year your Highness has been knocking about Paris, and leading the rough-and-ready Bohemian life of the Latin Quarter, under the assumed name of Philibert G. Phipps. But you cannot do so any longer. The hour has struck when you must drop your disguise, turn over a new leaf, and appear in your true colours.

PHIL. Why? What has happened? Have the police found me out?

TABB. Do you by any chance ever read the newspapers?

PHIL. Oh, Tabby, you do ask such searching questions.

What's the good of reading the newspapers? A newspaper—what *is* a newspaper, Tabb?

TABB. A newspaper is the History of a Day.

PHIL. Exactly; and History is always a-repeating of herself. So the newspapers are always the same. Who could tell Monday's paper from Tuesday's paper if it wasn't for the date? On Monday we read (with regret of course) that John Jones was fined for being drunk and disorderly; on Tuesday, that Jane Smith was fined for being disorderly and drunk. It's a difference without distinction. There's no new thing in the newspapers except the date.

TABB. I confess that, owing to the haste with which newspapers are necessarily prepared, they sometimes lack distinction. But tell me—are you in correspondence with anyone at Norenfels.

PHIL. Norenfels? Norenfels? Oh, yes, I remember. —Oh, no, I'm not in correspondence with anyone at Norenfels. Nobody at Norenfels knows my address.

TABB. Then I suppose you're not aware of the events that have been occurring there lately?

PHIL. Fi, fi, Tabby. Events at Norenfels! You can't expect me to believe any such nonsense as that. Has the British Ambassador had a tooth drawn? Has my ex-fiancée, Princess Wilhelmina, the Baroness von Sollenstiegel, given a tea-party? Has Frau von Regenschirm's Angora cat had kittens? That's the only kind of event that ever occurs at Norenfels.

TABB. You think so? Well, then—you've succeeded to the throne, that's all.

PHIL. What!—Oh, Tabby, how could you break it to me so suddenly? Unfeeling man!—Oh, but you don't really mean it? Not really? Tell me you don't. You're only saying it to tease me. It's a cruel hoax.

TABB. If you'd condescend to read the newspapers, you'd be better informed. On Sunday morning, at a quarter past six, your august grandfather died of influenza. He was eighty-six years old, and hadn't sufficient vitality to resist the inroads of the modern plague.

PHIL. Poor dear Grandpa! This is a blow, Tabby; but one I was not wholly unprepared for. As you say, he was past his first youth; and his liver was bad; and he had a chronic catarrh, and varicose veins, and lumbago, and eczema, and kidney trouble, and ossification of the spleen; and he never *could* digest those heavy mid-day German dinners, and he always over-ate; and he was getting deaf and losing his sight and his memory, and I had long steeled myself to expect the worst at any moment. Still, it's a blow.

TABB. Your Highness's emotion is entirely natural, and does you great honour. A fellow-feeling makes the whole world kin. It is in moments of loss like this that the hearts of sovereigns and subjects throb in unison.

PHIL. Thank you, Tabb. Your simple manly expression of sympathy will help me to bear up. But that doesn't justify what you said a little while ago. It isn't I who succeed to the throne on Grandpa's death. It's my Uncle Max.

TABB. Exactly. But now I must ask you to summon all your strength, be brave, and prepare for another crushing blow. On the morning following his illustrious father's decease, your uncle the Duke Maximilian was seeking to assuage his grief by shooting sparrows in the Palace Garden—when his gun burst, a fragment entered his brain, and he died at four o'clock in the afternoon, without recovering consciousness.

PHIL. Oh, how sad. Sorrows never come in single spies, but in battalions. Poor sweet old Uncle Max. Go on, go on, thou messenger of woe. Any more relatives or connections dead? My step-grandmother? My aunt-in-law? My cousin Ludwig? I'm nerved for anything now, you know.

TABB. That's all for the present. But, as you see, you've succeeded to the throne. You're the Reigning Grand Duke of Norenfels, Duke of Schlotz-Sommervitz, Count of Erdan, Boch, Durchland, and Gronefeldt, Margraff of Sanftwald, and Prince Palatine in the Holy Roman Empire. You've been proclaimed such under the title of Philibert the Ninth. The only trouble is, your loyal lieges don't know where to find you. There's a hue-and-cry for you

all over Europe. This morning's papers are crammed with articles about the Missing Prince. I wanted to be the first to announce it to you and to offer you my congratulations. It will make magnificent copy. "Our Paris Correspondent discovers the Missing Prince, and is the first to inform him of his Accession. Interview with His Highness!"

PHIL. And thus we see that it's an ill wind which blows no one good. My misfortune is your opportunity.

TABB. Misfortune?

PHIL. Bereavement.

TABB. But think of your compensations. A throne—a grandducal crown—and a Civil List of thirty thousand a year! By the bye, I forgot to mention that your Grand High Chancellor Baron von Sollenstiegel is in Paris.

PHIL. Sollenstiegel—old Sol—in Paris? Bless my soul. Is Wilhelmina?—is his wife with him?

TABB. No, he's accompanied by the Lord Chamberlain, Graf von Regenschirm, and the Commander-in-Chief of your Highness's Life Guards, Field-Marshal von Blück.

PHIL. Also without their wives?

TABB. Certainly—without their wives.

PHIL. Poor dear things! What are they doing in Paris? Without their wives! And exposed to all the temptations of a great town! It's shocking, Tabb.

TABB. They're come here to look for you. They only arrived this morning. They are at the Grand Hotel.

PHIL. To look for me ? Do you think they'll find me ?

TABB. I'm sure of it. To be frank with you, I—I've put them on your scent. I called on them while they were breakfasting, and I said they'd be sure to find you in one or another of the cafés or restaurants of the Latin Quarter, if they'd inquire everywhere for Mr. Philibert G. Phipps. Then I left them and came on ahead. They're following and may arrive at any moment.

PHIL. I dare say you meant well, Tabby. I suppose I can hardly refuse to see them, since they've come so far on purpose. It'll be rather a bore, though. (*ZIZETTE singing without.*) Hush ! Here comes Zizette. Don't say anything about this matter before our friends. I shouldn't want any private grief of mine to cloud their pleasure. Besides, it would take the edge off the surprise they'll have when Sollenstiegel turns up. Fancy old Sol going from café to café throughout the Latin Quarter, asking for Mr. Philibert G. Phipps !

(*Enter ZIZETTE, singing, followed by POPOFF and BODLEY HEAD.*)

ZIZETTE. Well, have you finished your confidences ?

PHIL. Yes, I think so.

ZIZETTE. And are you ready now to tell me what it's all about ?

PHIL. Oh, the secret's Tabby's. It seems he's in love.

ZIZETTE. Oh ! whom with ?

TABB. I protest

PHIL. (*interrupting*) With a married lady several years older than himself. And now he's going to fight a duel with her husband

TABB. Nonsense!

PHIL. Oh, I beg your pardon—with her son, her eldest son, her only son, who's an Austrian Naval Officer; and he wants me to serve as second. I tell him he ought to be thoroughly ashamed of himself.

ZIZETTE. I should think so! I'm surprised at you, Mr. Tabb. A married lady; and you an Englishman!

TABB. I assure you

PHIL. Don't listen to any of his denials. He went into the affair, he says, in the hope of collecting materials for a novel on the Woman Question. By the bye, would you like to visit Germany? Have you ever done the Rhine? There's nothing like travel for improving the mind. Let's make the Grand Tour—an indispensable part of every gentleman's education. (*Takes ZIZETTE by the chin, and sings*)

Lavender's blue, diddle-diddle,
Lavender's green;
Now I am king, diddle-diddle,
You are the queen!

Anyhow, I know you like sauerkraut, and lager beer, and Frankfort sausages; and German pickles are not half bad, either.

ZIZETTE. (*alarmed*) Are you off your head?

PHIL. No, only a bit shaken by what Tabby has been telling me. It appears my grandfather is dead.

It is not every day in the year that a fellow loses his grandfather. I am not what I seem. I am Reigning Grand Duke of Norenfels, Duke of Schlotz-Sommervitz, Count of Erdan, Boch, Durchland, and Gronefeldt, Margraff of Sanftwald, and Prince Palatine in the Holy Roman Empire. I've been proclaimed such under the title of Philibert the Loth. The only trouble is, my loyal lieges don't know where I am. If you doubt my own unsupported testimony, ask Tabb.

ZIZETTE. What has happened to you? What has he been drinking in my absence?

PHIL. Nothing but information. Tabby has been flowing with that like a fountain. (*Sings*)

“ Tap him ne'er so lightly,
Out with facts he broke,
Firmly but politely
Protesting when you joke.”

ZIZETTE. (*more and more alarmed*) Call the waiter, someone. Order some ice. Let me fan him (*fanning him*). There, dear, are you better? Oh, tell its own Zizizette it was a little better.

PHIL. Just a little teeny-weeny bitsy better.

(*Enter WAITER.*)

WAITER. Mr. Phipps, sir, I beg your pardon, but there's three gentlemen downstairs asking for you, sir. Shall I show them up?

PHIL. Show them up, show them up. (*Exit WAITER.*)
Zizette, you must be brave—you must be prepared

to meet a great calamity in a spirit of strong womanhood. They've come to tear the mask from your Phippsum's face. Popoff, Bodley, Tabb—cluster round me. Lend me your moral support. This is an awful moment.

(Enter SOL., REGEN., and BLÜCK, all in ill-fitting frock coats, ribbons of orders in button-holes; hot and dusty.)

SOL. *(bowing, mopping brow with pocket handkerchief)* Ah, at last! At last, your Highness, we have found you. We have visited every café, restaurant, and public-house between here and the Pont Saint-Michel, looking for you.

ZIZETTE, HEAD, POPOFF. *(all together)* Highness!

(TABB goes up and explains to them while PHIL. answers SOL. Movements of astonishment amongst them all. Then they pay close attention to PHIL. etc.)

PHIL. *(answering SOL.)* How nice of you, to take all that trouble just to find poor little me. I hope you'll suffer no ill effects from your exertions. Won't you sit down? You must be tired and thirsty after your long ramble in the heat. How do you do, von Regenschirm? And you, von Blück? *(They bow low.)* I hope your lady-wives are pretty well. What'll you have to drink?

SOL. *(pompously)* Thank you, but we cannot feel that the present moment is appropriate to drinking. *(REG. and BLÜCK, standing behind him, shake their*

heads and murmur : Ach, nein, nein !) And if we are hot, tired, and thirsty, we have the inner satisfaction of knowing that we are suffering in the sacred cause of duty. (REG. and BLÜCK *nodding : Yab, yab !*) We have come from Norenfels to Paris for the purpose of informing your Highness

PHIL. (*interrupting ; airily*) Oh, we know. We know what you have come for. Our good friend Mr. Tabb—Allow us to introduce you. Mr. Tabb, General Continental Representative of the “London Bugle,” Baron von Sollenstiegel, Lord High Chancellor of the Grand Duchy of Norenfels. (TABB and SOL. *bow, SOL. stiffly, TABB genially.*) Our good friend Mr. Tabb has been thoughtful enough to tell us that our illustrious grandfather and uncle are no more. You find us overcome by our emotion. Won’t you sit down? What’ll you have to drink?

SOL. We have come not merely to announce to your Highness the sad deaths of his august relatives (REG. and BLÜCK, *Nein, nein*) but also to convey to him an expression of our own and our fellow-countrymen’s respectful sympathy (REG. and BLÜCK, *Yab, yab*) and to

PHIL. (*interrupting*) Thank you. Thank you very much. Your simple manly words will help us to bear up. Do sit down. What will you have to drink? A nice brandy and soda iced, you’d find, would cool and revive you.

SOL. (REG. and BLÜCK always nodding and confirming what SOL. says) Your Highness will pardon us, but we must decline your offers of refreshment. We are here as Special Envoys from the Privy Council of Norenfels to inform your Highness of his accession to the throne of his ancestors and to escort him back to his dominions.

PHIL. Oh, hang my dominions. I don't want to go back to my dominions. Let me make you acquainted with my friends. Madame Zizette—Baron von Sollenstiegel. Baron von Sollenstiegel is a very old friend of mine whom I shall expect you to be extremely fond of, if you can. (SOL. bows very slightly, looking horrified.)

ZIZETTE. (*condescendingly, affecting the grande dame*) How do you do? For His Highness's sake I will try to like you.

PHIL. Graf von Regenschirm, Field-Marshal von Blück—Madame Zizette. Monsieur Popoff—Baron von Sollenstiegel. Monsieur Popoff, President of the Tenth Section of the International Guild of Affiliated Mine-layers, a distinguished enemy of Society—Baron von Sollenstiegel, Chancellor of Norenfels, a solid serviceable pillar of the State. (*Horrified glances from Germans. POPOFF nods grimly to them.*) Mr. Bodley Head, an English poet, slightly decadent—Baron von Sollenstiegel, Messieurs von Regenschirm and Blück. There, now we all know one another. Let's sit down. What'll you have to drink?

SOL. Your Highness will pardon our insistence, but we have no time for anything but business. We must beg your Highness to come with us at once—otherwise we shall miss the train.

PHIL. Train? What train? What's the use of introducing irrelevant matter into the discussion of a perfectly simple question? What will you have to

SOL. The 3.18 for Norenfels, in which we have engaged a private saloon carriage. It is now (*looking at watch*) 2.37, and it will take more than half an hour to drive to the station.

PHIL. I am sorry to have to say anything harsh, but this haste is positively indecent. Besides, I wanted to do a little something to make your visit to Paris pleasant. I thought of taking you to the Bullier ball to-night. You'd much better stop till to-morrow. I've only just been re-united to you, after so long a separation. It will be hard to lose you so soon again.

SOL. But your Highness is coming with us.

PHIL. Can't possibly. Awfully sorry, don't you know, but positively can't. Up to my ears in engagements, and all that sort of thing. Thanks just the same for asking me.

SOL. But your Highness *must* come with us. It is essential that you should at once assume the reins of government. Also there is the joint funeral of your grandfather and uncle, set down for Thursday,

at which it is imperative your Highness should assist.

PHIL. Bother the reins of government. And I hate attending funerals. You can represent me at the funeral; and I'll stop here and govern by telegraph.

SOL. Your Highness must remember that the government of Norenfels is constitutional

PHIL. Oh, you needn't fling that in my face. I know it is—deplorably so. (*Menacingly*) If it weren't

SOL. . . . and that, by the terms of the Constitution, the Sovereign is required to reside within the Duchy.

PHIL. Is he really? But—but couldn't we alter the Constitution? Couldn't we undermine it? Unless it's a very robust Constitution, I should think we could do something to destroy it. Couldn't you send me my Civil List, here to Paris? Then I'd let you have your own way about everything else—I would, honour bright. You could look after Home affairs, and I'd stop here to keep the peace with France. I'm sure by that arrangement we'd both be much more comfortable. I should bother you awfully if I came to Norenfels, you know. I should constantly be interfering. It's such a dull little place, it offers so few distractions, I should have to worry you a good deal to keep my spirits up. Ah, do be nice now, and say yes.

SOL. What your Highness proposes is quite impossible.

PHIL. Ah, don't be horrid. I'll—I'll erect your Barony into a Marquisate, if you'll be nice and say yes.

SOL. Your Highness's proposition is quite out of the question.

PHIL. You incorruptible old thing, you. I'll raise your salary—I'll double it.

SOL. My salary is ample for my modest needs. The Constitution requires you to reside within the Duchy, and, in the event of your failing to do so, provides that *ipso facto* you shall be understood to have abdicated.

PHIL. What a disobliging Constitution it is, to be sure! And if I am understood, *ipso facto*, to have abdicated—what happens then?

SOL. The next in succession—your Highness's cousin, Prince Ludwig—comes to the throne.

PHIL. (*turning to his friends*) Oh dear, I wish life weren't so complicated. I'm torn by conflicting passions, the desire to stop in Paris, and a frantic longing to play the dog in the manger. I couldn't bear to be the means of Ludwig's coming to the throne. It's of all earthly things that which he would most enjoy, and I dislike him so.

POPOFF. A mouse can help a lion. Allow me to offer you my services. Let the individual in question ascend the throne, and I'll arrange with my brother Minelayers in Norenfels to place a bomb under it.

ZIZETTE. Hush, you bloodthirsty creature. (*To PHIL.*) You don't imagine I'll let you abdicate, I hope.

I've just discovered that my preserver is a Grand Duke, and now he talks of abdicating.

PHIL. Your preserver ?

ZIZETTE. Certainly, my preserver—my noble, gallant, generous preserver.

PHIL. Preserve ? Preserve ? (*Consults pocket dictionary*) Preserve—verb, active—to kee—oh, yes, I see.

ZIZETTE. Now that I have risen to such an exalted station, you must no longer expect me to use common words of one syllable. And, by the bye, before we continue our discussion, please elevate me to the Peerage. I should like to be made a Countess in my own right. (*Kneels.*)

PHIL. Certainly, with pleasure. Rise, Countess of Rothenwang. (*To SOL.*) Please prepare her Ladyship's patent of nobility. (*Horror on the part of Germans.*)

ZIZETTE. (*rising*) Thank you, Sire. (*To SOL.*) We'll not abdicate. We'll go with you to Norenfels by the 3.18.

PHIL. You don't know what you're committing yourself to. You can't fancy how homesick you'll be. Norenfels is the dullest little principality in Europe.

ZIZETTE. Never mind. We'll liven it up. You'll let me wear the Crown jewels, won't you ? And you'll give me a carriage and pair with liveried servants. And I'll have all my dresses made by Worth. And

we'll cut an awful dash. Oh! you dear old Dukie-wookie, you!

PHIL. Thus it is that women decide the fates of Empires. And so I must leave my humble happy life in the gayest of European capitals, to assume the cares of State in quite the tiresomest! Ah me!—But (*to* BODLEY HEAD, POPOFF *and* TABB) you fellows will come with us, won't you? Can you reconcile it with your anarchistical principles, Popoff?

POPOFF. I'll try to, if you'll appoint me Chief Inspector of High Explosives in your Ammunition Works.

PHIL. I will. (*to* SOL.) Prepare Monsieur Popoff's commission. (*To* BODLEY HEAD) And you, dear Bodley?

HEAD. I will follow your Highness to the uttermost ends of the earth, if you'll name me Poet Laureate, with the title of Baronet.

PHIL. Certainly. Would you mind kneeling? (BODLEY HEAD *kneels*.) Rise, Sir Bodley Head, Bart. (*To* SOL.) Prepare Sir Bodley's papers. (*To* TABB) And you, old Tabb?

TABB. Oh, I'll come to write up your coronation.

PHIL. All right, then, Sollenstiegel, we'll return to our dominions. Call a cab, please. (*Music of band without*.) What's that? The National Anthem? How's this?

SOL. We hired a band, your Highness, to follow us, and to strike up when Field-Marshal von Blück made a sign from the window.

PHIL. (*tragically*) Already! Already! O dismal fore-
taste of the things to come!

CURTAIN.

NOTE.—*The two Germans who accompany Sollenstiegel must stand behind him, and, by gestures, nods, and murmurs, echo and confirm all he says.*

Act III

Six months are supposed to elapse between Act II. and Act III. The scene is PHILIBERT'S private sitting-room in the Royal Palace. POPOFF is seated in armchair at left: savage scowl on face, evidently plunged in bitter meditations; on table beside him, a glass of absinthe from which he occasionally sips. BODLEY HEAD in another armchair at right. On table beside him five uniform volumes; one by one he picks them up, and writes on fly-leaf, slowly, elaborately. ZIZETTE is strumming on the piano in the background. In centre of room, a large writing-table littered with papers and so forth. Enter two footmen, bearing between them a big tray, heaped up with letters, which they place in pile on table. They go out, and come back with tray heaped with documents showing seals and ribbons, which they arrange on table, and again they go out. ZIZETTE suddenly brings her hands down on key-board with a crash, springs up, and comes forward.

ZIZETTE. (*exasperatedly*) Oh, I say! This isn't very lively, don't you know. (*Looks at clock on mantel-piece*) Only ten minutes to ten! Oh, that German clock! It *does* get on my nerves so! The slow little methodical, humdrum way in which it fusses along!

It's as stupid, and pompous, and important as everything else in Norenfels. I declare, the very time of day here is disgusting. More than three hours till luncheon; and luncheon's the only excitement one can hope for between breakfast and dinner. Can't you fellows think of something to do?

HEAD. (*putting down last book*) There, that business is finished. My new volume—limited edition—five copies only—two for America—all signed and numbered by the author. (*To ZIZETTE*) Yes, it *is* a bit tedious, I confess. But what would you have? Figs do not grow from thorns, nor grapes from thistles. Even so, it were futile to expect aught but tediousness in Norenfels. For myself, I have the sweet inner satisfaction of feeling that I have done a good morning's work (*indicating books*). Work, work; it is the great consoler. For you, fair lady, I fear there is nothing to do but to suffer and be still.

ZIZETTE. Bodley, you're an idiot, a pulpy idiot.

HEAD. And you, dear Countess, a mistress of rapier-like repartee. I can forgive the unkindness of your expression for its subtlety.

POPOFF. (*emerging from his brown study, bitterly*) A curse upon this policy of non-resistance. Action—action! Every fibre in me calls for action. (*Rising and walking backwards and forwards*) Tedious! The word is feeble. The more I think of the grinding, crushing, deadening monotony of existence in this unspeakable little Principality, the harder I find it

to reconcile my residence here with my anarchistical principles. (*Sips absinthe*) It is driving me to evil courses. (*Taps brow*) It is making a wreck of a once noble mind.

HEAD. My dear Popoff, don't be violent. In life, as in art, attitude is the essential. And we should strive to make our attitude here gracefully symbolic of the rugged poetry of stoical endurance. We should strive to cultivate a beautiful and patient serenity.

ZIZETTE. Oh, stow it, Bodley. This is no time for rolling periods. Stow your rhetoric, and try to think of something to do.

POPOFF. Do you realise that it is six months, six weary, dreary months, since we were induced to come here? When I recall the merry days and nights, the jovial comrades, the noise, glitter, movement, rush of the Latin Quarter, and compare it to the unutterable stagnation of this torpid backwater, I could dynamite myself for my folly. I'd rather be a paving-stone in Paris than an equestrian statue in Norenfels.

HEAD. Ah, it depends on what you're accustomed to. You've never lived in Bayswater.

ZIZETTE. Paris, Paris! Don't name its name. (*Placing hand on heart*) Paris—the Latin Quarter!—I shall faint if you can't think of something to do.

HEAD. I'm afraid we've exhausted the resources of the place. We've got all the joy that can be got from serenading the Prime Minister, nailing up the door of the Lord Chamberlain, and mixing lamp-

black with the Commander-in-Chief's pipe-clay. My imagination falters. We might—(*pauses, thinking hard ; then, with smile, as of inspiration*)—we might—we might try to think of rhymes for "wasp."

ZIZETTE. Oh, bother rhymes for "wasp" !

POPOFF. Oh, damn rhymes for "wasp" !

HEAD. Ah, don't be profane. We might—we might—we might sit on the floor and tell sad stories of the deaths of kings.

ZIZETTE. Oh, curse the deaths of kings !

HEAD. Not so loud. It's treason to curse the deaths of kings.

ZIZETTE. I don't care if it's trebly treason. I'll relieve my feelings though the heavens fall. I'll give you five seconds more, and then, if you haven't thought of something to do, I'll—I'll play the National Anthem.

HEAD. Ah, grace, grace, dear lady !

POPOFF. Oh, don't do that, don't do that !

ZIZETTE. Then beware how you drive me to extremities. Now then—one, two, three——

POPOFF. Hold ! I've thought of something. Let's—let's strike ?

ZIZETTE. Strike ?

HEAD. Strike ?

ZIZETTE. Strike what ?

HEAD. Strike whom ?

POPOFF. Strike the iron while it is hot. Let's form ourselves into a federation, and strike as a body. Let's

leave. Let's say good-bye to Philibert, upon whose hospitality we have already trespassed too long, shake the dust of Norenfels from our feet, and return to our former avocations. Let's go back to Paris.

HEAD. (*doubtfully*) That's a bold stroke that you're proposing.

ZIZETTE. And a cruel one. Leave poor Philibert here to bear it all alone? How can we?

POPOFF. There are limits to what even Friendship has a right to demand. Six continuous months of residence in Norenfels would alienate the ivy from the oak.

ZIZETTE. Do you really think so?

POPOFF. I'm quite sure of it.

ZIZETTE. Thank you. Go on.

POPOFF. Think of the Boulevards, the cafés, the theatres, operas, balls. And then think of this! If Philibert doesn't like the notion of stopping here alone, let him abdicate and come with us.

ZIZETTE. (*dreamily*) The Boulevards, the cafés, the theatres, operas, balls. Oh, oh! I love Philibert; I love him with passion; I love him with deep strong affection. And I must not forget that when the crown of Norenfels was offered him, he did thrice refuse it,—until I interfered and persuaded him to accept it. But sad experience has taught me that Court life is not what it's cracked up to be. I should hate to seem ungrateful; and yet—Please go on. Urge me some more. I am a poor weak woman.

If you urge me enough . . . I shall be almost sure to yield.

POPOFF. (*insinuatingly*) Think of the Bois de Boulogne ; think of the Luxembourg Gardens, where the band plays through the long summer afternoons. Think of the asphalt—the omnibuses—the glittering shop windows. Think of the mashers. Think of the dinners at Lavenue's, the suppers in *cabinets particuliers*. Think . . .

ZIZETTE. Enough, enough ! My resistance is exhausted. I have made a firm fight, but I am conquered. Let us go back to Paris. When shall we start ?

POPOFF. To-day.

HEAD. (*consulting A B C Guide*) There's an express train at 1.45.

ZIZETTE. (*dancing for joy*) We'll take it, we'll take it. Tra-la-la, tra-la-la ! Oh, how my heart is thumping ! Paris, Paris ! No more Norenfels, no more of it for ever ! Ah-h-h-h ! Good old Popoff ! You really have ideas. Let's—let's go and pack.

POPOFF. Lead on !

HEAD. On, on ! We'll go and pack, and pack and go.

(*Exeunt.*)

(*Orchestra plays National Anthem softly. Footmen throw open centre doors. Enter PHILIBERT in smoking-jacket and slippers.*)

PHIL. (*stopping at table and looking at pile of letters*) I do wish people wouldn't favour me with so many communications. (*Sweeps letters into waste-paper*

basket) And my industrious Commons—fancy their passing all these Bills at a single sitting. (*Picks up one document after another, scans it, and drops it into waste-paper basket*) Bill for the Suppression of Conversation in Omnibuses.—Bill amending Press Regulation Act. (*Reads*) “In no newspaper, journal, gazette, periodical, magazine or public print, shall advertisements, announcements, intimations, or notifications of Births precede those of Marriages.”—Bill for the Regulation of Street Traffic. (*Reads*) “The speed of no vehicle, carriage, cab, van, cart, wain, waggon, bicycle, tricycle, or equestrian to exceed four miles an hour in the public thoroughfares or parks of Norenfels.”—Bill forbidding the running of Trains on Bank Holidays.—Bill prohibiting the Sale of Cigarettes to unmarried Females—that’s a blow at my poor Zizette.—Bill for the Better Government of the Suburbs. Aha! they’ve passed that, have they? This is how Sollenstiegel, to secure the votes of the Suburban Members, plots the disruption of my Empire, and in the high-sounding phrase, “For the Better Government of the Suburbs,” wraps the insidious principle of Home Rule. Shall I, by a stroke of the pen, sign away those suburbs that my ancestors fought, bled, and died to conquer? Never, never. (*Drops Bill into waste-paper basket, and comes forward*) Ah, the cares of State, the cares of State! This intense, concentrated intellectual work is ruining my health. What with signing Bills

and drawing cheques, I have every symptom of incipient writer's cramp. (*Yawns. FOOTMEN throw open doors.*)

FOOTMAN. Mr. Tabb. (*Exit FOOTMAN. Enter TABB, travelling costume, bag in hand.*)

PHIL. Ah, good morning, Tabby. Glad to see you. Had a safe and pleasant journey, I hope?

TABB. Yes, thank you. Directly I got your Highness's wire, I threw a few necessary articles of clothing into a portmanteau, took a cab to the Gare de l'Est, and was lucky enough to catch the Oriental Express just as it was pulling out of the station. I hope I find you well?

PHIL. Alas, no, Tabby, far from well. The fierce light that beats upon my throne is wasting me to a shadow. However, I've not summoned you here to harrow up your feelings with a description of my bodily ailments.

TABB. Don't stop on my account. If it gives you any relief go on. (*PHIL. crosses to table, and fetches box of cigarettes, while TABB pulls telegram from his pocket and reads*) "Tabb—Paris. Come to Norenfels at once. Magnificent chance for copy. Philibert."—What's the row?

PHIL. (*offering cigarettes*) Smoke? (*TABB takes and lights cigarette. PHIL., lighting cigarette, continues*) Row? Oh, it isn't a row, Tabb. It's a joke. (*Chuckles*) My dear fellow, it's the greatest joke of the Twentieth Century. I'm not a conceited man—

you don't think I'm a conceited man, do you, Tabby?

TABB. Not at all, not at all. Modest to a fault.

PHIL. I'm not a conceited man, but though I say it myself (*chuckling*) the conception is one of the most novel and humorous that has ever germinated in a human brain. (*Laughs.*)

TABB. That sounds promising. Out with it. Let me hear it.

PHIL. (*stifling his laughter, sitting down, and throwing himself back in chair*) Sit down, Tabb, sit down. It's a long story. I'll have to begin at the beginning.

TABB. (*sitting*) Yes, I'm all attention.

PHIL. I don't know whether I've ever happened to mention to you that I'm disposed to consider life in Norenfels a trifle uninteresting?

TABB. Ah, yes, I think you have. I think I even remember your going so far as to call it dull.

PHIL. Perhaps, perhaps. I sometimes permit myself these excesses of language. Well, do you know, I've remarked with some alarm that our good friends Sir Bodley Head, and Popoff, and even my own little Zizette, the Countess of Rothenwang, also appear to find life here slightly—unstimulating.

TABB. Really?

PHIL. Yes, I'm afraid so. I have even remarked among them symptoms of what I fear must be termed disaffection. And, to tell you the whole

truth, I live in daily, hourly terror of their refusing to stand it any longer.

TABB. Do you indeed! You mean . . . ?

PHIL. Yes, taking the bull by the horns, and abandoning me to my fate. Going back to Paris, and leaving me here to stew in my own juice to the end of time.

TABB. Impossible. That would be black, base un-friendliness.

PHIL. No, no, don't blame them too harshly, Tabb. You've never lived here. You don't know what it's like. To understand is to forgive. They can't stomach Norenfels, and I don't wonder. I can't stomach it, either; and what's more, I won't. I've given it a fair trial. I came back here six months ago determined to endeavour honestly to make the best of it—to wear my crown with a cheerful countenance. But, my dear chap, the thing can't be done. And so I've formed an indomitable resolution: I've made up my mind to bring my reign and residence here to a glorious termination.

TABB. Ah? How? Going to abdicate?

PHIL. Oh, Tabb, you have so little imagination. Abdicate? Not I, there's no fun in abdication. To abdicate were to go out like a guttering candle. I want to go out in a blaze of glory, like a . . . I don't happen to think of anything for the moment that goes out in a blaze of glory, but you understand the sentiment.

TABB. Oh yes, I catch the idea.

PHIL. And then, besides, if I abdicate, there's Ludwig. Perhaps you are aware that I don't like Ludwig? I should hate to see him stepping into my shoes. And, another point, I have learned from a careful study of the Constitution that there's no pecuniary provision made for an abdicating sovereign; and I shouldn't be, as I am, every inch a Grand Duke if I hadn't an eye to pecuniary provisions. No, no; you don't catch me abdicating.

TABB. H'm; but then . . . I don't see. . . . How are you going to manage it?

PHIL. (*chuckling*) There, my dear chap, there's where my humorous idea comes in (*chuckles*). Tabby, I've done my best. I've tried conscientiously to make the worst monarch that has ever worn a constitutional crown. I have fostered every abuse that I could think of. I have exceeded my prerogative on numberless occasions. I have snapped my fingers at the time-honoured traditions of my realm. I have made the Prime Minister's life a burden to him. I have attended the sittings of my loyal Commons in dressing-gown and slippers. I have frequently appeared in the High Street in a bowler hat and without gloves. I have even gone to the length of refusing to buy my provisions from local tradesmen, and have had them direct from the Army and Navy Stores. In one word, I have done everything in my power to make myself insupportable and to get myself hurled from the throne.

TABB. Really? And with no results? Won't they hurl you?

PHIL. Tabb, you don't understand the character of my people. Their capacity for passive endurance would have shamed an early Christian martyr. They murmured, they frowned, but they were incapable of action. I saw that what they needed was a leader: some high-spirited, energetic, commanding personality, to organise them, stir them up, and guide them. A sort of Cromwell.

TABB. Ah, yes, but Cromwells don't grow on every bush.

PHIL. (*rising and going to chest of drawers*) No, that's true enough. They don't. But has it never occurred to you that in these days of every man his own lawyer, every man his own doctor, one might go a step farther and say every king his own Cromwell?

TABB. Ah, but that would mean suicide. Cutting
(*indicates cutting throat by gestures*).

PHIL. Tabb, you should never pursue an analogy too far. (*Takes disguise from drawer, and puts it on*) The long and short of it is that if you want a thing well done, you must do it yourself.

TABB. (*watching PHIL. with astonishment*) What in heaven's name are you up to? A false beard? A wig? I don't understand.

PHIL. (*facing him*) Think you'd recognise me? Rather striking, eh?

TABB. I certainly shouldn't recognise you. But what's it all for?

PHIL. (*striking his breast*) Ah, Tabb, in this disguise and under the assumed name of Ichabod Schmidt—Don't you think that's rather a nice assumed name, Tabb?

TABB. Yes, yes, all very well. But go on.

PHIL. In this disguise, and under the assumed name of Ichabod Schmidt, you see before you the fomenter of a revolution.

TABB. How? What?

PHIL. I, even I, am the leader of the Populist Party, the Centre of Rebellion, the Darling of the Mob. For many long weeks I have been industriously sowing the seeds of discord amongst this simple people. I have organised the students, the artizans, the dissenting parsons, the cabdrivers, the tallow chandlers, and the costermongers of my Principality into a powerful secret society for the purpose of abolishing monarchical institutions, and establishing a free and independent republic. You can't imagine what uphill work it has been, but at last success has crowned my efforts. Our plans are all concerted, I have sent my cousin Ludwig with the army to pass this beautiful spring day up the river; and at noon the tocsin sounds, the people rise, overwhelm the police force, and, led by me, declare the Republic from the steps of the Town Hall.

TABB. By Jove! You are audacious. But I really don't see why you wouldn't gain as much, with less expenditure of vital force, by simply abdicating.

PHIL. Ah, but, my dear Tabb, the joke! The fun! The humour of the thing! The irony! The excitement! And then, besides, you've only heard half the story.

TABB. Ah, tell me the other half.

PHIL. I dare say you'd never suspect it from my manner, but I'm a secret spy in the service of my powerful neighbour Russia.

TABB. A secret spy! Your Highness! Oh, how—how—how—

PHIL. (*cheerfully*) Interesting? Yes, I thought it would interest you. But it's so. I, Ichabod Schmidt, have betrayed the plans of the Revolutionists to the Russian Government; I have forewarned the Emperor of our impending rising. Imperial troops are massed upon my frontier; and, as the frontier is within the four-mile radius, they can reach the centre of Norenfels in less than an hour's march. So then! At twelve o'clock precisely the Republic will be declared; at 12.15 the Imperial forces will pour into the town and occupy it; suppress perhaps the shortest-lived republic known to history; proclaim Norenfels—on the pretence that the actual Government has proved itself incapable of exercising due authority and maintaining peace and order—proclaim Norenfels extinct as an independent sovereignty; and, in the name of the Emperor, annex it, with all its appendages and belongings, to the territories of the Emperor of Russia.

The dewdrop slips into the shining sea. What do you think of that, Tabb?

TABB. H'm, it's ingenious, most ingenious. Can't deny that. A very pretty, theatrical little *coup d'état*. All the same, I don't see what you gain.

PHIL. (*chuckling*) Why, first of all, a laugh, a grim, sardonic laugh, at the expense of this grotesquely dull little State. Norenfels shall not have died without affording me at least one moment of amusement, and then, if the throne of my ancestors is crumbled with the dust, where is Ludwig? How can Ludwig step into my shoes, if they have been already invaded, occupied, and annexed by the iron heel of Russia? And then, not last though least, one of the provisoes of my arrangement with the Imperial Government is to the effect that poor dethroned, discrowned Duke Philibert shall receive an annuity—ha, ha! now you begin to see, old Tabb?—an annuity of twelve thousand pounds sterling; it will suffice for his modest needs; he will go back to Paris, and there frolic in freedom and unpretending affluence to the end of his days.

TABB. (*enthusiastically*) Your Highness, accept my unrestrained congratulations. Your scheme is fairly Napoleonic. I can make at least ten columns of pure bright wholesome copy out of it. I'm awfully obliged to you for your thoughtfulness in sending for me to come and write it up.

PHIL. Don't mention it, don't mention it. Always

glad to do a friend a good turn. But now (*pulling out watch*) I must be off to look after my mob. Follow me, stick close to me, and you'll get the best possible view of the day's proceedings. (*Exeunt.*)

(*Enter SOLLENSTIEGEL, fussy, important, looking round; accompanied by the PRINCESS WILHELMINA.*)

SOL. H'm. Duke not here.

WIL. Not up yet, I suppose.

SOL. Very probably. This habit he's fallen into of lying abed till all hours of the morning is positively disgraceful.

WIL. Positively. You should introduce a Bill to enforce his rising early.

SOL. H'm, apropos of Bills, where are those I sent for his signature this morning? (*Looks on table*) Not a vestige of them. That disreputable old anarchist Popoff is quite capable of having lighted his pipe with them.

WIL. It's even conceivable that Sir Bodley Head may have used them to scribble verses on.

SOL. Perhaps the Duke has had them brought to him in his bedroom.

WIL. In that case the Countess of Rothenwang may very likely have used them for curling papers.

SOL. Ah, the glorious State of Norenfels has fallen upon evil times when its Sovereign chooses for his bosom friends and counsellors a Zizette, a Popoff, a Bodley Head.

WIL. It has, it has. This condition of things cannot continue. Something must be done to put a stop to it. You must frame a Bill with a view to its suppression.

SOL. I will, I will. The Nonconformist Commission is shaken to its foundations. I have here (*tapping breast*) in my pocket a petition from the Worshipful Company of Dissenting Grocers entreating me to interfere.

WIL. Perhaps it would be as well, before moving practically in the matter, to take Counsel's opinion.

SOL. I have already done so. Here it is—(*hands paper, taken from pocket, to WIL.*)

WIL. (*reading*) “I am seriously disposed to doubt whether it is permissible under the Constitution for the reigning Duke to choose his own boon companions. I am strongly of opinion that their nomination and appointment should rest with the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. It has definitely become law that the Sovereign may not select his own lady-housekeeper or gentleman-butler; it has been held that to invest the Throne with that prerogative would be to imperil the liberties of the subject. I am of opinion that in equity and common law, and in the absence of any precise ruling on the point, he should not be allowed the dangerous privilege of selecting his own friends.” (*Speaks*) Very good. Some Radical member must raise the question in the House. Do you hear, Sollenstiegel?

SOL. Yes, my love. It shall be as you wish. (*Noise of many hurried footsteps without.*) Ah, what's this?
 (*Doors burst open. Enter crowd of Courtiers and Court Ladies: the old DUCHESS FERDINAND, DUCHESS MAX, VON REGENSCHIRM, VON BLÜCK: all excitedly, confusedly calling "The Duke? where is the Duke?"*)

BLÜCK. The Duke? His Highness? Is the Duke not here?

SOL. Why this unseemly turbulence, this disorder? What has happened? What's the matter?

BLÜCK. There is trouble in the town, a mob in the streets, and as ill-luck will have it, the Army is spending the day up the river. It is rumoured that the people have risen in revolt, and are marching upon the Palace.

DUCH. M. Oh, Baron von Sollenstiegel, dear Baron von Sollenstiegel, we depend upon you to defend us.

DUCH. F. You will surely not let the common, vulgar, lower and middle classes intrude upon the privacy of our home.

SOL. (*to each in turn*) Calm yourself, Ma'am, calm yourself, Ma'am. (*WILHELMINA draws him aside, whispers to him, evidently giving him instructions what to say. He bows assent and then speaks*) You may trust in me. I will do what I can. But this is serious news. I must reflect upon it. (*Bows his head in attitude of profound reflection, while all wait breathlessly attentive. Enter ZIZETTE, POPOFF, and BODLEY*

HEAD, *in travelling costume. The two Dowager Duchesses and Court ladies draw in their skirts, and flash indignant glances at ZIZETTE, who scornfully perks her chin up at them. Some of the courtiers, noticeably among them VON REGENSCHIRM, try to attract her attention with smiles, winks, and nods.*)

ZIZETTE. (*to POPOFF and BODLEY HEAD*) What can this mean? Such a number of people in our private apartments.

BLÜCK. (*deprecatingly*) 'Sh! 'Sh! Baron von Sollenstiegel is reflecting.

ZIZETTE. Oh, I don't mind that! What is it all about? And where is Philibert?

DUCH. F. Shameless wanton! How dare she speak in our presence?

DUCH. M. Brazen hussy! And to call His gracious Highness by his Christian name!

ZIZETTE. (*staring at them impertinently through a lorgnon, turns to REGENSCHIRM, who has sidled up towards her*) What has happened to bring those two dear old dowagers into my wing of the Palace?

DUCH. F. Old dowagers, indeed!

DUCH. M. Her wing of the Palace!

ZIZETTE. Oh but, I assure you, you're very welcome! (*To REGENSCHIRM*) What is the Lord Chancellor thinking so hard about?

REGEN. A grave political crisis has arisen. Baron von Sollenstiegel is reflecting how to meet it.

ZIZETTE. Oh! a crisis? Really? What sort of a crisis? Oh, what fun! (*Movement on part of BODLEY HEAD and POPOFF. REGENSCHIRM explains to the three while SOL. speaks.*)

SOL. (*in the meanwhile having held whispered conference with WIL. and got his orders*) H'm, I think perhaps the most prudent course to take in the circumstances would be to shut and lock the Palace doors.

DUCH. F. Ah, what wisdom, what foresight!

DUCH. M. Dear brave von Sollenstiegel! what could we do without you?

SOL. (*after a word from WIL., modestly*) I only do my duty. For thirty years I have never failed to respond to the sacred voice of Duty. I have been the faithful servant of your family in the days of its prosperity; do you think I would leave it to shift for itself in an hour of supreme peril like the present? All the best energies of my intellect are at your disposition. (*Rings bell on table: enter FOOTMAN.*) Close and lock the Palace doors! (*Sound of trampling footsteps without: inrush of members of mob, headed by PHIL. in disguise, accompanied by TABB, who throughout proceedings takes notes.*)

MOB. (*shouting*) Where's the Duke? Down with Duke Philibert! (*Consternation on the part of Court. SOL. draws himself up, and fronts MOB.*)

SOL. (*prompted by WIL.*) Halt there! What means this intrusion? The private apartments of the Palace are by the terms of the Constitution only open to

visitors on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays; and to-day is Tuesday.

MOB. (*shouting*) Down with Duke Philibert! Down with the Throne! Long live the Republic!

SOL. Don't all shout at once! What do you want?

PHIL. The country is in revolt, my Lord. It has grovelled under the iron tyranny of the Throne too long already. It is ripe for self-government. The people have risen in their might, thrown off the yoke of despotism, and declared a Republic. (*Cheers from the MOB with cries of "Long live the Republic!"—murmurs amongst the Court—signs of intense interest and curiosity on the part of ZIZETTE, POPOFF, and BODLEY HEAD.*) Where is the Duke? We have come to seize the Duke. Hand the Duke over to us at once. We want to hurl him from the throne.

SOL. (*always prompted by WIL.*) I don't know where he is. I'm not the Duke's keeper. I don't think he's up yet.

MOB. (*roaring*) The Duke! The Duke! Give us the Duke!

SOL. Can't you see the Duke's not here?

PHIL. Then in his absence you must answer for him. Do you think you can answer for the Duke? Are you, in his name, prepared to accept the Republic? or will you enter upon the perfectly fruitless task of trying to resist the will of the people?

(*The two Duchesses and Court cluster round SOLLENSTIEGEL, pleading and conferring with*

*him. WILHELMINA gives him his instructions.
He then steps forward.)*

SOL. Fellow-countrymen! I have listened to, and carefully considered the demands which your spokesman has formulated, and I have but one reply to make to you. The government of Norenfels is constitutional; and by the terms of our Constitution—which, let me add in parenthesis, is the true source of our nation's greatness, as well as the guarantee of its liberties—by the terms of the Constitution, I say, the reigning Sovereign cannot be deposed nor a Republic declared except by the advice and consent of both Houses of Parliament, sitting as a joint committee. If you will now return peacefully to your respective homes I will summon the Peers and Commons to meet at this hour to-morrow, and to consider what steps had best be taken in the circumstances.

MOB. (*crying*) No, no, no, no!

PHIL. Ah, come! that won't do, you know. We're not going to have any temporising. By this time to-morrow the Army will have returned from its holiday, and we'll no longer be in a position to enforce our demands. It will perhaps help you to a more rapid determination in the matter if I mention the fact that the Republic has unanimously elected you its first President.

SOL. Oh?

PHIL. Yes.

SOL. Ah, h'm, that certainly does put a different face on

the situation. (*Anxiety and consternation on part of Court. He consults WIL.*) At what salary?

PHIL. Four hundred a year, with a house, gas, and coals, and prospects of a rise if you give satisfaction. Do you accept?

MOB. (*shouting*) Long live Sollenstiegel! Long live the Republic! Long live our Grand Old Man!

SOL. Not old. Not so very old. Middle-aged.

PHIL. They say old for the sake of euphony. Long live our grand middle-aged man doesn't slip easily from the tongue.

MOB. Speech! Speech! Accept! Accept!

SOL. (*after consultation with WIL.*) Fellow-citizens! I am overcome with emotion and with . . . (*hesitates for a word.*)

PHIL. (*suggesting*) Exultation.

SOL. With the consciousness of my own unworthiness for the high office to which you have chosen me. I have but one reply to make to you. The government of Norenfels is constitutional . . .

MOB. Hear! hear!

SOL. And by the terms of the Constitution—which, let me add in parenthesis, is the true source of our nation's greatness, as well as the guarantee of its liberties . . .

MOB. Hear! hear! hear! hear!

SOL. By the terms of the Constitution, I say—no, come to think of it, I am mistaken. The emergency is one which the framers of the Constitution, in some

unaccountable fashion, failed to foresee. (*Consults WIL. and resumes with aplomb*) However, it is my duty and privilege, as Lord Chancellor, to interpret the Constitution where it is obscure, and, as it were, to complete and round it out where it is inadequate. Therefore, at this historical moment, shaken by my emotion though I am, I cannot refuse to respond to the sacred voice of Duty, and to put the best of my intellect to the discharge of the functions of that great and responsible office to which you have unanimously called me. Fellow-citizens, I accept!

(*MOB shouts, cheering SOL. Great enthusiasm and commotion, in the midst of which enter a number of Russian soldiers with an officer at their head.*)

Russ. O. Seize these insurgents!

(*Soldiers fall upon MOB, seizing various members of it, amongst others PHIL.*)

Russ. O. (*in loud voice proclaiming*) Hear ye, all persons here assembled! In the name of the Russian Empire I hereby declare the Grand Duchy of Norenfels in a state of insurrection, and therefore, in the interests of the general peace and security of the Realm, extinct as an independent Principality, and annexed to the territories of the Emperor of Russia. Is Baron von Sollenstiegel present?

SOL. (*stepping forward*) I am Baron von Sollenstiegel.

Russ. O. (*handing him document*) You have been appointed by his Imperial Majesty Civil Governor of the new province. Here is your commission.

SOL. (*after consulting WIL., taking commission*) Thank you. I have never faltered when the voice of Duty called.

RUSS. O. I have further to announce that the Imperial Government allows Duke Philibert a compensation of twelve thousand pounds sterling a year (*producing cheque*). Is His Highness present? Here is a cheque for the first quarter.

PHIL. (*tearing off disguise, released by soldier, stepping forward, taking cheque*) Thank you very much.

ZIZETTE. Philibert!

HEAD *and* POP. Philibert!

SOL. The Duke!

COURTIERS *and* OTHERS. The Duke!

PHIL. Yes, poor little me! (*ZIZETTE rushes to his arms.*

BODLEY HEAD, TABB, POPOFF, *cluster round him.*)

And now I think the only thing left for us is to take the first train back to Paris.

CURTAIN.

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